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THE VILLAGE SHOP.

THE little huckster's shop, the general shop, in fact, the Shop, is as completely an institution of the genuine English village as the Forge, the Hall, the Parsonage, or the Church. It answers to the Oriental bazaar in being at once the great reservoir and exchange of parochial gossip, and the place where everything can be bought, and where, in default of other marts, everything *must* be bought. The shop contains all wares, from a reel of cotton to a pound of small-shot, and numbers among its customers everybody, from the esquire to the travelling tinker. Even if you live at the Hall or the Manor-house, with a store-room amply replenished, a larder well victualled, and no lack of servants, horses, and carriages, to facilitate the making, in person or by proxy, your purchases in the county town, you will occasionally be glad to avail yourself of the humble shop. How important a part, then, must the shop play in the life-drama of those whose larder is a cupboard as bare as Mother Hubbard's in the nursery tale, who have no store-room or still-room, no horse or carriage, who must live from hand to mouth, and buy their pennyworths close to their own threshold! The village shop is especially the shop of the poor.

We have most of us a superficial acquaintance with this shop—its window is stored with bottles of raspberry drops, bulls' eyes, and other coarse confectionary, tempting to children, with gingerbread, song-books, needles and tapes, Dartford gunpowder, and Horniman's Tea. We know its half-door, seldom long shut, as the querulous jangling of the bell proclaims at the entrance of each fresh customer; we know its massive counter, smeared with grease, and littered with samples, its mazes of tiny drawers, its egg-boxes and dusty chests, and crates, and recondite cellar; we know its aged proprietrix, with the spectacles and ink-stained ledger, and some active niece or grand-child, who multiplies herself to serve all comers. But what we do not know—most of us, at least—is that the village shop is at once a monopoly and an engine of extortion, a devouring quicksand, that absorbs the small earnings of the poor, and which, like the quicksand, is none the richer for the prey it sucks into its greedy maw.

When Canning, in one of his indignant philippics against commercial fraud, made the sweeping declaration that 'retail trade was robbery,' the public were variously affected thereby: some doubted the statement; some swallowed it as self-evident truth; others (the retailers especially) were indignant; and a few persons, more thoughtful than their neighbours, began to imagine that there must be a kernel

of fact beneath the husk of that startling paradox. Canning had access to the best information, and in those days accurate information was scarce; he was a minister of the crown, too, and with all his courage was not Quixote enough to speak without book on a subject in which so many had a vital interest, and on which contradiction was so certain. He did speak from book—from blue-books. Those laborious parliamentary compilations did not find so many readers then as now; nor were they so freely issued as at present, when every loquacious M.P. is permitted to plunge vicariously into paper and print, and to publish the statistics of Dahomey, or the natural history of Benbecula, at the cost of John Bull. The blue-books taught Canning the immense profits made by the middleman between the great trader and the small consumer. He learned by their perusal what, at the time, was a mystery to by far the greater part of his contemporaries—namely, the gigantic upward leap which prices take in emerging from the wholesale world into that of retail traffic; and, without stopping to ask whether the gains of the middleman were not in some cases more nominal than real, or whether certain sets-off might not fairly be pleaded by this agent, he denounced the whole system as a swindle *per se*. Now, it is not to be denied that in all cases a very large addition, and in some instances an addition perfectly enormous, is made to the price of every article vendible by retail. We are all of us compelled to pay very dearly for the privilege of buying our provisions, our clothes, our fuel, everything, in fact, by small quantities at a time. Unable, or unwilling, to purchase a considerable stock at once, we have to maintain the tradesman who is willing to keep that stock for us; his shop is, in fact, the reservoir whence we draw our supplies by instalments, and we pay him from twenty-five to two hundred per cent. for the accommodation he thus affords us.

At first sight, and on grounds purely moral, this may appear an extortion and a crying abuse; but the retailer is not without his answer to such a charge. He may take his stand on the principles of political economy—may affirm his right to buy in the cheapest, as well as to sell in the dearest market—and may deny that any price willingly paid by an uncoerced customer ought to be reckoned as extortionate; or he may plead the mutability of fashion, the caprice of the public, the risk of bad debts, the long credit that he is forced to give, and the probability that much of his stock may remain on his hands. But if the rich and the comfortable pay much, the poor and the needy pay more—far more. This excess of payment is not relative to the different means of customers whose places are at opposite ends of the social ladder,

but is positive as a problem of Euclid. Giles the carter, or Roger the ploughman, gives more for his groceries than his 'betters' do. Sir Harry at the great house, or my lord at the abbey, does not pay so much to Fortnum and Mason, or to Morel, as Mrs Giles gives for the inferior bohea that supplies her little brown tea-pot with its welcome infusion. Roger has a fancy, perhaps, for coffee at breakfast, and never dreams that the trashy compound which he procures from the village emporium is far more costly than the aromatic Mocha that simmers daintily on the squire's table. Mesdames Giles and Roger, poor women, have no experience of London prices, no credit with London firms: they are thrifty housewives, mayhap, but they know no better than to buy in the village shop the ounces of mixed tea, and ground coffee, and moist sugar, and other creature-comforts, almost as indispensable now-a-days to the peasantry as bread itself. Mrs Giles is a wife and a mother, has 'kept house' these dozen years, and has had work enough sometimes to make both ends meet, and to eke out her husband's moderate wages in such a manner as shall insure a crust for all those hungry mouths at home throughout the year. She—that tall, bony woman in the faded lilac gown of Manchester cotton print, with lines on her careworn face that make her look ten years older than the parish register shews her to be—could give many a lesson in practical saving to dilettanti economists. She has pinched, and scraped, and managed, and practised denial of self, and, what is harder, denial of her children's cravings, and has somehow struggled through. It has been a struggle: you may read its history in the wrinkled sallow face of one who was a blooming lass a few years ago, but the drear campaign against Poverty has been gallantly waged. Let us admit that Giles and his wife have done well, if, with half-a-dozen children, they have kept the wolf from the door, unaided by parish dole or alms from the Hall; yet let us wonder at and deplore the fact that Mrs Giles, with all her thrift, gives six or eight shillings a pound for tea by no means fit for a mandarin's palate, buys adulterated coffee at a price that Mincing Lane would marvel to hear of, and pays as much for mutton-fats and coarse Muscovado as richer folks for wax-lights and lump-sugar.

But what is poor Dame Giles to do? She is compelled by poverty, ignorance, and lack of choice to reverse the grand axioms of the Manchester school—to sell labour in the cheapest market, to buy produce in the dearest. Her education was not as carefully attended to as it might have been. Parents, in a poor district, will not leave their children long at school; they fetch them home, and make them useful; a little reading and writing, a faint smattering of the four cardinal rules of arithmetic, a fast vanishing acquaintance with the geography of Palestine, are all that the rustic matron owes to her two or three years of instruction. The agricultural poor have not, as we have, the Tutor's Assistant at their finger-ends, and a clear notion of weights and measures in their heads. Mrs Giles, for instance, would be puzzled if you asked her how many ounces go to a pound, or how much a pound her tea costs her. The truth is, she never in her life ventured on so large an investment. A pound of tea! She buys by the ounce; so many pence she pays for that small medium, in its scrow of brown or blue paper; and she can tell you to a tea-leaf how far the fragrant herb will go in her domestic economy. But even if you were to tell her that a pound avoirdupois contained sixteen ounces, and that she was consequently giving, say about six-and-sixpence a pound, for very poor stuff, she would not appreciate the discovery. A pound, to her, would seem 'a deal.' Six-and-sixpence would seem 'a deal,' too. But she would consider that the enormous quantity of tea was a fair equivalent for the large amount of money, and would vaguely imagine that the former would be enough

to last a long time. So it probably would, for cottage brewings of the 'China drink' that gave old Poppys a new sensation and a fresh paragraph for his diary, are seldom strong, and are usually repeated before the hidden virtues are thought to be wholly extracted. But if you were even to tell Mrs Giles that her rich neighbours gave much less for their Souchong, and Congou, and Orange Pekoe, than she for the sweepings of a Cantonese hong, the effect produced upon her mind would scarcely be satisfactory. She might be moved to indignation against Mrs Jones of the shop, or more probably would she accuse her aristocratic neighbours of miserly parsimony, and swell with a secret pride in her own more liberal expenditure; but it is very unlikely that she would dream of laying in her future groceries from a distant and cheaper mart. Tea is not the only article in a rustic's housekeeping that costs him more than its worth. Loaves and cottons, flannel and sackcloth, dimity and tape, bobbins and matches, the balls of worsted that are to repair grandfather's hose, the brown holland that is to compose Tommy's pinafore—these, and a thousand such as these, come from the shop. So, in many cases, does beer, when the shopkeeper is a favourite of the squire, and is consequently able to procure a licence to deal in the blood of John Barleycorn, 'not to be consumed on the premises.' Eggs and butter and cheese, treacle and rice and meal, physic for man and beast, sweetmeats, and sand for cottage floors, all come from the shop. The *magasins* of Paris pride themselves on selling but one article, their speciality; the shops of rural Britain are equally proud of their encyclopaedical character, and retail everything from macaroni to mouse-traps. So much the greater is their importance in the eyes of the rustic world, and so much the more cruel is the tax which their high charges levy upon very scanty incomes and lank purses.

The old purveyor of the poor, the roaming pedler, with his smooth tongue, and pack replenished with gay gauds, fine ribbons, and polished cutlery, is almost extinct. Here and there, in remote moorland districts, you may still see Autolycus with his ell-wand and box of trinkets, tempting the girls with his display of glittering baubles and shewy sarcenets, wheeling matrons into purchases of rotten gingham and pointless needles, or foisting worthless razors and cast-iron clasp-knives upon the Corydons and Lubins of the community. The pedler, I fear, was usually a rogue in grain; his cutlery was made to sell, and not for mere shaving and snipping; his dyes were evanescent; his fabrics frail; and his jewellery of Birmingham make. But he had one advantage over the shop that has supplanted him—his was necessarily a ready-money traffic. The peasants might empty their little store of cash into his canvas bag, but they could not get into debt with him; whereas Mrs Jones has a ledger which many luckless wights regard as the Black Book of Fate. We will presently consider the credit system, as it obtains in a village; but we have some more prices to deal with. There are other things required by Giles and Roger than groceries or clothing. There is a good deal of gunpowder and of shot sold in a rustic parish; more, perhaps, than the squire would approve of, and this ammunition is retailed at the emporium of the village, at quite a fancy price. It is not necessarily for purposes of poaching that these articles are in demand; men find it needful to scare the birds from their allotments, their gardens, and patches of arable land; labourers now and then mend the family dinner by knocking over a rabbit on the common, or on some farm where the tenant is propitious, and the keeper without authority; in winter, there are wild-fowl on the marshes, larks on the down, and sparrows in the hedge. Sometimes, too, there are matches where a fat pig, or a silver-mounted fowling-piece,

may be the prize of the successful marksman. For all these purposes, as well as for actual poaching, gunpowder is required; and it certainly is hard that whereas young Squire Rapid gives two shillings a pound for the best diamond-grain Dartford, or three shillings for those tempting red canisters of Prince Albert's rifle-powder, Roger and Giles should pay about five shillings a pound for an explosive compound not much better than that which we sell to our savage customers of Ashantee or Caffreland. But then Giles and Roger buy by the ounce, and know nothing of market value. The ploughmen and wagoners have no time, of course, to tramp to the county towns for what they want, nor can their wives, with plenty to do at home, be expected to do so.

But most villages contain a carrier, whose trips to the cathedral city, or the market-town, are sufficiently frequent and regular, whose eyes are opened to the difference of cost between goods vended in town and goods vended in the country, and who knows the wants and means of the village public to a nicety. Here, then, one would say, is a person thoroughly capable of rectifying the abuses of the system, who will be able, by the recital of what he has seen elsewhere, to moderate the demands of the rural monopolist, and who could, in default of persuasion, execute the commissions of his neighbours on terms that both parties should find remunerative. Not so, however. Unluckily, although the carrier's eyes are open, he uses them exclusively on his own behoof. He, indeed, makes a larger actual profit out of the ignorance and apathy of his humble friends than the shopkeeper can do, because he avoids the bad debts that are the latter's shoals and quicksands. His business—the carrier's business—is chiefly with the export trade, not with the imports, of the hamlet. Often in a town, a greedy picker up of local gossip, and a vigilant scrutiniser of the public pulse, the carrier knows better, in homely phrase, than to carry his pigs to the wrong market. Mr Jolter has an eye to the raw material produced in the parish, and an eye also to the urban mart. He buys the labourer's hog, the widow's poultry, the apples that exhibit their gold-green and red streaks over the hedge of the peasant's garden, and is careful not to wrong himself by giving too much for these. Then he jogs off to the town, where he knows the value of delicate pork; where each of those fine apples will be worth fourpence—those apples that cost Mr Jolter but a shilling a dozen; where the eightpenny pullets will be doubled in price; and the sucking porkers will rise from a crown to a guinea. Of course, independently of the fact that Mr Jolter has the carrying-trade in his hands, and is well paid for conveying the chests and crates from the railway station to the low-browed shop, the carrier cannot be expected to enlighten people's minds very materially on the subject of metropolitan prices. Mr Jolter lives in a glass-house, and is too prudent to lapidate the equally fragile tenement of Mrs Jones at the shop. How if Mrs Jones were to retort in kind! how if she were to furnish a few revelations of the market rates for provisions, only known to the well-to-do farmers, the carrier, and perhaps herself! But the shop has one excuse which the carrier lacks. Mrs Jones must give long credit; she must keep books wherein to enter a myriad of incongruous pennyworths against her customers; she must coax at one time, and browbeat at another, to obtain those instalments of sundry hot coins of copper and silver which little girls bring in on Saturday afternoons from absent mothers in far-away cottages among the hills and dales—those trifles on account that are wrapped in bits of rag, and squeezed in the hand of the little messenger through an hour's walk in patterns over the meadow-paths. And every fresh account is sure to be coupled with a request for new supplies, which must not be denied, save in extreme

cases, or the shop would grow unpopular. Lucky is Mrs Jones if, at harvest-time, and when ale is flowing and gains large, she is able to settle with her debtor, to rattle the full amount into her till, and to score out the items in her ledger with a hieroglyph implying a receipt.

But often, times are hard with a family, or there is sickness, or a tipsy husband; and for years the bill at the shop swells and grows, and angry remonstrances are made, and amendment promised, and something is paid, but not much, and Mrs Jones must cut off the supplies. This is an extreme case; so is that in which the village dealer appeals to law to enforce payment. The county courts are crowded with petty traders of the town, suing their needy customers for bills long due, though even they are wondrous patient, as a rule. But it must be after much provocation that Mrs Jones resorts to a plaint and a writ of summons; nor does her name often figure on the registrar's list. Public opinion would condemn her if she were to act thus harshly towards poor Giles, when his broken leg loses him the wages of a quarter, or towards poor Roger, whose five youngest children are ailing and ague-stricken, and a sore charge to the toiling parents. But public opinion is a two-edged weapon, and as every one's circumstances in a country parish are minutely known, even to the amount of savings, if any, in bank, or tea-pot, or stocking, the customers dare not be wilfully recalcitrant; they feel they must pay when they can. The worst of it is, that they cannot always be as honourable as they would wish. We all know what an inducement to extravagance it is, even with the educated and the wealthy, when *desiderata* can be conveniently obtained without immediate outlay. Few of us can resist the temptation of having something that we wish for, but ought not in prudence to buy, 'put down to the bill.' Materfamilias and the young ladies drop in at Mr Sarcenet's, and light-heartedly add this muslin and that tarlatane, and so much silk, and so many yards of ribbon, to the account whose sum-total already would make Paterfamilias purse up his lips if he could see it. Nor is Paterfamilias, in his line, one whit wiser.

It is too much to expect the poor and untaught to excel us in prudence and forethought. Mrs Giles and her friends are not more reckless of the future than their worldly superiors. They run up scores for cheese and bacon; they buy frocks and pinafores on credit; they mortgage the golden glorious harvest long before the grain is yellow, or the reaper hired; and they trust to something 'turning up,' like Mr Micawber himself. Here, then, is the excuse of Dame Jones at the shop. She *must* give credit, and for long and uncertain periods. She loses by some customers; she has much trouble with all. The honest and laborious must virtually pay for the unprincipled or the unfortunate. Monopoly is never a good thing, and the shop is a monopoly. But then one village would no more support two shops than one sky could contain two suns. There are not, in most cases, enough customers to keep two establishments solvent. If there were, competition might reform the present abuses. As it is, even were the lord of the land to consent to the opening of a rival shop, mutual ruin would ensue. The only remedy that seems available, is the establishment of such co-operating firms as have recently been set up with excellent effect in the Lancashire and Yorkshire manufacturing districts. Through these clubs, maintained by aggregated wages, the keen-witted operatives are able to feed and clothe their families at cost price, and wholesale price to boot, thus doing away with the middle-man and his profits altogether. Such societies as these might be a great boon and blessing to many a rural parish, and might, while teaching the agricultural peasantry new habits of thrift, spread out their slender finances so as to embrace many more comforts than at present. The

load of debt, too—the curse of all ranks in England—would be lifted from that class which is of all orders of the commonwealth the most helpless and the least erudite. These new clubs deal for ready money; they practically inculcate economy, and repress a reckless spirit that would feast to-day at the risk of fasting to-morrow. Of course, it would be idle to expect that Giles and Roger should found such associations for themselves. But the rustic population are only too docile, too meek, and too easily managed by their superiors in rank and riches; and it would be a kind and a graceful exercise of influence on the part of those superiors to take the initiative in such a case as this.

MELIBŒUS AT THE FIRE.

'WHERE is the fire?' ejaculated Melibœus, thrusting his head out of the window of the four-wheeler, for all his favourite Hansoms had been chartered long ago by the lovers of excitement.

'Some says as it's the Tower, gents, and some as it is down at Woolwich. But we can't go very much wrong with *that* afore us,' and he pointed to the dull red glare in the east, which seemed to glow and widen with every revolution of our wheels. 'It's a main grand fire, however, gents, you may rely upon that; and for *my* part,' added he, with a sagacious grin, 'I don't care how fur it is off.'

'What capital luck I have!' soliloquised Melibœus, as he lay back in the vehicle with his legs upon the opposite seat; 'just in time to see a man fished out of the Serpentine this very morning—hooked out, sir, by a most ingenious and horrible instrument—and recovered by means of being rolled half over and then back again, like a barrel on board ship in a storm; then, dinner with the Benevolent Costermongers; and now a fire! How much denser the population is growing! I suppose we are getting into a poorer part of the town. How curious it is, too, that they are all walking one way!'

It was curious, although not inexplicable, to anybody who had not dined with the Benevolent Costermongers, or who had dined there with moderation. Strings of people were pouring out from every smaller street and alley, like the feeders of a swollen river, into the larger thoroughfare along which we were going.

We were yet a very long way off from the scene of the conflagration, but it was even now attracting all men to itself out of their usual orbit. The sleep that succeeds to the day of manual labour, the dissipation that begins at midnight for the man of pleasure, the studies that beguile the student from his lonely bed—all these were broken in upon and exchanged for that rare spectacle even in the metropolis—a gigantic fire. A dwelling-house or a shop on fire, though it had been in the next street to them, would have provoked but few to leave their homes or occupations; but the news which had already flown, itself like flame, from lip to lip, that some vast range of buildings—the Custom-house, St Paul's, the London Docks, nay, even as one insisted, the Thames Tunnel—was making noonday of the night up in the city yonder, excited the most phlegmatic. The very sight of such a multitudinous mass of one's fellow-creatures made the pulses throb. The hum of such innumerable voices was a magic music, which caused the most weak and sluggish to press forward. Where it was possible, men ran—always with their eyes intent upon that midnight sun, looming now large indeed, exchanging anxious and excited thoughts about it with their unknown neighbours—and where quick motion was impossible, as at a turnpike or cross-roads, they pushed and strove as though those were their own

homes blazing yonder, and their wives and children were within them. As for ourselves, who had started for the first half mile or so at as near an approach to a canter as a cab-horse could be expected to compass, we now advanced, and were thankful that we did advance, at a foot-pace. The multitude filled not only the pavements but the roads themselves, and surged under our very wheels like devotees of Juggernaut. So densely did they throng the carriage-way, that those in vehicles actually seemed to be borne upon their shoulders as in a funeral procession. When we got out and upon the roof of the cab—a judicious proposal of the driver, which was hailed with rapture by Melibœus—the sight was strange indeed. The streets in front of us were packed so closely, that we seemed to enter them, auger-like, by boring.

Except for its dreadful reflection in the sky, we had seen nothing of the fire as yet, by reason of the intervening houses, but presently, on coming to a bridge, it burst upon us like a volcano in eruption. Though it was distant yet, we saw the lurid flames flicker high in the air, with their smoke-canopy over them; and beneath the arches of London Bridge, which still hid from us the great body of the fire, the water ran red as blood. As the people debouched upon this spot, and caught their first glance of the conflagration, an inarticulate murmur of delight and awe burst from them, quite distinguishable from the hum of those who were in advance, and had seen it, and of those upon whom the vision had yet to strike for the first time. A border as of blackest moss hung over every parapet and balustrade, and fringed all roofs and attic windows. Upon the boats below, and on every pier which jutted out into the mud—for the tide was very low—it also lay, and that so thickly, that save when one saw it closely, clinging to the lamp-posts, and to every gable-end and coign of vantage, no matter how dangerous, one could not recognise it for what it was—mere men and women. Slower and slower yet became our progress, till at last we did what, according to the doctrine of chances, we ought to have done long before—we ran over a man. He was not much hurt, but his language to our cabman, who was not at all to blame in the matter, was very low down in the epithetical barometer indeed.

'Lor' bless you,' returned he, with the utmost good temper, 'of coorse I'm sorry; but who's to elp it? You ought to be thankful that it was your eel instead of your ed. As for your words, I minds 'em no more than if they was music.'

Presently, however, we came to a place where to advance, even over people's heels, was absolutely impossible. It was a narrow way, with a large market hid away at the end of it, and as unknown to me as it was to my bucolic companion.

'Where *have* we got to?' exclaimed Melibœus earnestly. 'This is surely Ultima Thule.'

'No, sir, it 'taint,' returned the cabman with simplicity. 'Tooley Street is more to the north than this here; but I am afraid as I can go no further.'

Here, then, we left our cab, and descended into the throng, which bore us for a considerable distance before it let us sink down upon our feet. Two units in the million-footed mass, we then moved very slowly on towards London Bridge. That vast thoroughfare was now wholly unpassable, except by vehicles of great burden and momentum, such as vans and omnibuses, and some half-dozen of these were just starting in our vicinity to carry passengers—that is to say, spectators—across, for the sum of two shillings; their ordinary fare from very great distances to London Bridge being twopence. Over and over they traversed the thick-peopled bridge—just as the same individuals cross and recross the stage in the minor theatres, to represent processions—and from the crowded roof of one of them we watched the fire consume its gigantic prey.

The south bank of the river was by this time one

mass of party-coloured flame, white at the core, and red at the extremities, and it lit up all things with an unreal theatric splendour. The summer night was sultry, but the glare from that conflagration would have warmed all it fell upon had it been midmost winter. It was calm and still, too, so that the rattle of the fiery snakes that writhed about the masses of ruin, and leaped up with their forked tongues to lap fresh fuel, was terribly audible. Where the streams of water, poured from a score of engines, fell most plentifully, the serpents hissed and sputtered, but never for a moment ceased to coil and spring. There were mighty walls indeed, said to be fire-proof, still standing, but they had taken service with the enemy, and belched forth flame from every window and doorway; their very roofs of iron, their very floors of stone, were all but alight themselves, and giving out as great a heat as the actual flames, set the whole atmosphere aglow around them.

The usual course of destruction was, first, to make a furnace of the inside of some vast block of buildings, where the progress of the desolation could be told only by the fiery messengers that flashed forth from floor after floor; and then to attack the roof, which seemed to shrink and tremble before sinking into the awful Gehenna beneath, when the triumphant flames would mount through the smoke, which before had alone held possession of the highest story, like a cloud upon a hill-top, and dance like enfranchised demons, leaping and licking higher and higher yet, as though they would have made a hell of the very vault of heaven.

The flames did really seem to have some sort of personal vitality of their own—to be actuated by malevolent fury—to be foes and haters of the human race, as well as destroyers of its goods. It was already known that the brave Braidwood had fallen a victim to them—and half the fire-brigade, said one, and nearly the whole of the A division of police, added another—and that awful news invested the dread spectacle with a hideous interest. The fire-demons had at last destroyed, then, the man who had of all men most curbed their rage, and disappointed them of their prey; and it almost seemed as though they were aware of their victory, with such devilish joy did they climb, and whirl, and flicker around wall and rafter. They ran down into the red river itself in their reckless glee.

'The wall—the wall!' cried Melibœus; 'it totters—it is falling!' and while he spoke, the last long range of building which yet stood parallel to the stream crashed outwards, dulling for an instant the roar of the conflagration, and the thud of the persevering engines, and the murmur of the countless thousands, in the thunder of its fall. A vast volume of blinding light at the same moment flashed forth, as from a gigantic furnace-door, and the whole river was at once lit up with rose-red fire. It is said that that sudden glow actually scorched the faces of the multitude who thronged the wharfs upon the opposite bank. The Custom-house and the great market opposite at once flashed black responsive flame from every window. It really seemed as though their fire was real, and not reflected, and had leaped across the mighty chasm of the river itself in one tremendous bound. The Monument, with the iron cage at its summit crowded with human beings, was transformed into a pillar of flame.

'What a position would that be!' exclaimed Melibœus enviously, gazing up at that memorial of a scarce more majestic conflagration. 'What would I not give to be there!'

'Well, you would not give five shillings, I reckon,' returned our omnibus driver sharply, conceiving the advantages offered by his own conveyance to be disparaged by my companion's remark; 'and five shillings is the price to-night, you may take your davy.'

'I would give five pounds,' quoth Melibœus with enthusiasm.

'Would you, now?' continued the other contemptuously. 'Would you go and squander your wife and children's money in that manner? Why, only the first dozen of people see, bless you—those as you see up yonder, like bees in a glass hive, only a deal more crowded. The other couple of hundred are up in the corkscrew staircase a suffocatin', and all in the dark. You don't suppose the people as is down at the bottom, and wantin' to get in, will leave off pushin', or be persuaded that there is no room left in the cage, do you?'

'But surely,' observed Melibœus mildly, 'when the official perceives that the place is already—'

'My precious eyes!' interrupted the omnibus driver, with an intensity of scorn only to be conveyed by his own accents. 'Well, you are a babby, you are, and that's a fact! It's a bawdial treat, and reconciles one to human natur, to get 'old of a chap like you! What! send away people as is green enough to pay five shillings? Do you think them boats down there has nobody stowed in 'em, like a herrin' in a barrel, more than is warranted by their licence?'

Certainly, if the craft alluded to were not overcrowded, they had hit the extreme limit of accommodation, and the licence must have been of that reprehensible nature into which liberty is said sometimes to degenerate. Hundreds and hundreds of skiffs and wherries, packed so close with passengers that their oarsmen were not to be recognised, floated—and only just floated—in a dense and far-stretching mass upon the northern side of the river. The blood-red water could there be hardly seen for them, but the mid-stream was, for obvious reasons, left clear enough. The river itself was on fire there, with tar and tallow, which floating out in glowing masses upon the surface of the tide, threatened everything combustible with destruction. These fireships, sent forth from the seat of the conflagration, were thought by many to be the most dangerous part of it. What if some half-dozen of them, some three, some one, should find their way down to 'the Pool,' where lay the wealth of London! 'That would be a precious go, mind you,' observed our omnibus driver sympathetically; and if for 'precious' he had substituted expensive, and for 'go,' the word conflagration, the greatest purist in English speech could not fail to have agreed with him.

The draught created by the fire was, it is said, so great as to suck in a large barge coming up the river with her sail set; but in so awful a scene of confusion—in the 'alarms and excursions' so dramatically represented on that burning stage—it was impossible to know for certain the exact cause of any particular incident. What little wind there was, was south, and would have been itself sufficient to have drawn such a vessel towards the spot, in case of her helm being deserted by a terrified crew. At all events, the three men on board of the barge in question seemed about to be drawn into that burning fiery furnace—to which that designed for the three brave Jews of old must have been but as a bonfire—and they might both be seen and heard appealing for help, as they drifted slowly to their dreadful doom. In such a moment, and with such a sight to gaze at, the onlooking-world of people, however antagonistic and separated—pickpocket and policeman, cabman and fare, peer and (unbenevolent) costermonger—seemed to feel for once the bond of common brotherhood. 'With parted lips and straining eyes,' and hand clutching neighbour's hand, they watched, hardly daring to breathe, these unhappy kinsmen of theirs; and when a little boat with some brave fellows put off, and carried the seeming victims away, only just in time, from those flaming jaws, such a mighty cry of joy arose from bridge, and river, and street, that the roar of the fire was well-nigh quenched in it. These ebullitions of popular feeling—inexpressibly exciting to any man, and rendering Melibœus half delirious—took place in a less degree when any important building, such as the London Bridge

Railway Station, and St Olave's Church, were imminently threatened by the advancing fire, and, in particular, when the vessels moored in the vicinity of the burning wharfs, and unable to escape because of the lowness of the tide—which was, however, rising—were leaped at by the shooting flames, or became ignited of themselves through the excessive heat.

'The Fire-king,' observed Melibœus aptly, 'boards these devoted vessels like Ariel in the *Tempest*—

Now on the beak,
Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,
He flamed amazement—sometimes he'd divide
And burn in many places; on the top-mast,
The yards and bowsprit, would he flame distinctly,
Then meet, and join.

I almost think that Shakespeare must have witnessed some such scene himself.

In truth, no mechanical commonplace description could have better conveyed the idea of how the conflagration began and grew on shipboard, before the different boarding-parties of flame joined all together, and the vessel was swallowed up in fire. The floating engines played incessantly upon all things threatened by the flame, but not yet caught, and undoubtedly preserved one ship, whereon the blue beads of flame had already shewn themselves, and which was hauled out by steam-tugs the instant that the rise of the tide permitted her departure, scorched, but unconsumed.

During much of this time there were explosions from saltpetre and other combustibles, and bursts of fire shooting forth like Roman candles from the glowing masses of ruin. Altogether, and independently of its vast human interest, so grand a pyrotechnic display was never seen, nor one so costly planned by Imperial lavishness to please a spectacle-loving people. Scarce a country under heaven but contributed its share of precious fuel to that wasteful flame. Chests of tea, and bales of silk, and barrels of oil; cotton, and hops, and grain; butter, and sugar, and cheese; and turpentine and tar: nothing was spared that heat could melt, or fire could burn. Some superfluous tallow only escaped, which, flowing through drains and gutters into the river and streets, bestowed what to those who gathered it was boundless wealth, out of boundless ruin.

The gray morn came—and again and again returned, to find that funeral pyre of the wealth of the world yet burning—but still the people stood and gazed, as though fascinated by those fiery serpents, and more and more, whom the tidings had reached in their distant homes, still pressed to gaze. On every lip was heard the name of Braidwood. No hero surely had so many mourners, or died a death so splendid and so fitting. Melibœus had always some word of enthusiasm for his memory to the last, whoever addressed him upon that subject, although by this time he was what is called dog-tired. Excitement takes more out of him than it does out of other people. In his evening costume and crumpled white cravat, he presented in that ghastly dawn the appearance of an undertaker with whom times were bad. It is possible, however, that something detractory might have been said even of my own jaded looks. We were two hours, after descending from the omnibus, shouldering our weary way through the unyielding throng.

We felt sick and ill; for all night long—although it would have marred the splendour of our narrative to have dwelt upon it earlier—we had been half-suffocated by tallow fumes, which, as far as my limited experience goes, I hold to be the very nastiest stench that can be inhaled without stupefaction.

'I breathe tallow, I talk tallow, I *think* tallow,' cried Melibœus, with a miserable shudder. 'I believe it has sunk into every pore of my body. I am sure if you were to light my hair, I should burn for hours, like a cheap and nasty tallow-candle. And yet I

would not have missed that wonderful sight yonder for worlds! If you burned Bullock Smithy from the Roundhouse to the Pike at the other end, it would be nothing comparable to it.'

MYSELF AND MY RELATIVES.

CHAPTER XVII.

A TERRIBLE CRISIS.

'MR LEGRAND is to return from London very soon,' said my uncle to me one morning as the letters came in from the post: 'here is a letter for you.'

It was not from home—no. I felt my heart beat; and I know Colonel Daubeney's eye was upon it and me as I hastily put it in my pocket instead of reading it. Alone in my room, I opened it. As I expected, it was from Curzon Good, and these were the contents:

'MY DEAR MISS KEPPLETON—Having received permission to write to you, I trust you may not deem me presumptuous for repeating what I have already told you—that my heart is wholly yours. I know I am not worthy of you, yet something tells me I may dare to hope. Through extravagance of many kinds, while leading a course of life which I regret to say I was induced to follow by Lucien Legrand—(why should I not speak the truth?)—I have for some years been plunged into difficulties. The money my uncle has bequeathed to me will suffice to set me free from them, and I can start soon on a new footing. At present, I may be unable to maintain a wife, but there is promotion to look forward to, and under these circumstances, I offer you my hand, trusting that ere long I may have the great happiness of calling you mine. I want no fortune; I only ask for a heart that can really love me for myself. Write to me, I entreat of you, were it only one line, and let me know if I am to hope or to despair. CURZON GOOD.'

In spite of Mr Good's hope that I would not think him presumptuous, I confess I could not help feeling that his letter betokened few fears of what my answer would be; probably he had long known how deep my interest in him was. I was much excited, quite overpowered by the violence of my feelings. On the spur of the moment, I wrote the following reply to him, scarcely pausing to think whether I was acting prudently or otherwise:

'You were right in believing that I entertained a preference for you. I am proud of having gained your love, but I can make no promise of accepting your hand before consulting my mother's wishes.—Yours most faithfully, JESSIE KEPPLETON.'

This note I addressed to the hotel he was staying at in London, and it was despatched to the post-office half an hour after its completion. A new state of existence appeared opened to me now. Never before had I known the extent of my preference for Curzon Good. While I considered him as pledged to Jane Gordon, I dared not foster any feelings on the subject; but now I was at liberty to think of him at will. After a time, misgivings crept into my heart. What if my mother might not countenance him? Suppose my whole family set their faces against my choice? And then my uncle. I dreaded him more than all. I could do but little for my brothers and sisters as Mr Good's wife, while, on the other hand, as Mr Legrand's— I was very much perturbed thinking of all this one day, when my uncle's awful voice called me down stairs. Miss Gordon and Mrs Powell had been absent from home for about a week. I had a frightful presentiment of evil. The heart often tells beforehand when some hideous crisis is approaching. 'My God, let me bear it!' said I, pressing my hand on my heart. I went down with a giddy head. God knows what my face looked like, but it must have had a wild expression. The colonel

met me in the ante-room of the back drawing-room. He looked important—rather stern, I thought.

'Now, Jessie,' said he, drawing me to a sofa, 'I am commissioned by my dear friend Legrand to say, that in spite of the great disparity existing between your position and his, he is willing to marry you, a portionless girl, making handsome settlements, far surpassing my most sanguine expectations. In every respect, I consider you most fortunate, for Legrand is really an honourable man, perfectly disinterested.'

'My dear uncle,' I said trembling, 'I am very much obliged to him; but I—I—'

'What?' said the colonel calmly, as I broke down utterly in my little speech.

'I do not love him,' I replied slowly.

'Faugh! you will love him by and by. He seems to consider himself secure of you. He says you have always encouraged him.'

'What could I say now? Yet I did find a reply.'

'I was merely gratified by the attentions of an agreeable person,' I said; 'but I never wished Mr Legrand to propose for me.'

'And did you imagine that I invited you here to fritter away your time coquetting and flirting, with no serious thoughts of settling in your head?' he asked in a cool, wrathful way, that made me angry.

'I had no idea that it was to marry Mr Legrand,' I said, while a horrible flash of passion shot from my eyes.

'No impertinence, young lady. Do not forget yourself, pray. You have heard the saying probably, that beggars are not to be choosers.'

I prayed inwardly for patience, knowing well that one mad sentence might seal the fate of myself and my family for ever, as far as Uncle Daubeny was concerned. For the sake of those at home, I stayed my proud wrath, and said humbly—God alone knew what an effort that humility was—'My dear uncle, do not be hard on me. I thank you from my heart for all your kindness, but nothing can induce me to accept Mr Legrand. I had rather beg my bread than be his wife.'

'Nay, my good girl,' said the colonel, trying to speak calmly, though his face was white with rage—'I know young people have their fancies; I can make allowances for them; but you must make up your mind to have sense. Mr Legrand waits to plead his own cause in the library. Go to him, and be careful what answer you give him. I warn you that I hate folly, and if you prove yourself a fool, you will lose my countenance for ever.'

'My answer must be a refusal. Spare me, I entreat you, seeing this man.'

'Go!' said my uncle, pointing haughtily to the door.

I was mortified, and again the demon within me arose, flashing warmly from my eyes. 'I will not go!' I said haughtily.

'Indeed?'

'No; I shall write my answer to Mr Legrand; and I was turning away, when the colonel caught my arm firmly, as he said: 'Will you marry Mr Legrand for your own sake?'

'Never!'

'For your mother's?'

'No; less decidedly.'

'For your brothers?'

'Oh, my God, no!' I exclaimed, clasping my hands in agony.

'Not to gratify me of course?'

'Not for any one, or anything in the world!' I said emphatically.

'Then you leave my house the day after to-morrow,' said the colonel sternly. 'If you change your mind before this day passes, you may still preserve my favour, but otherwise we part now, never to meet again at Ripworth, or elsewhere. Good-day.'

Never had I seen a face look more demoniac in its wrath than that of my uncle. All that my mother

had said of him rushed into my thoughts, and even to this day I humbly thank Providence that my passion did not prompt me to tell him what she had told me of him. As it was, I said no more, but, wild with conflicting emotions, left the room.

'Why did I leave home?' was the question that rose to my heart as I slowly went up stairs.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NEWS FROM HOME.

Was it not terrible for me to reflect that I had at last quarrelled with my uncle? I felt like a person in a dream, yet I composed myself so far as to be able to write a polite refusal to Mr Legrand. Very bitterly did I now repent of the vain coquetry I had practised on that man; well was I punished for it. At about four o'clock in the afternoon I sent my note down to Mr Legrand by Purcell, and when she returned from leaving it with him, she handed me one from the colonel, which I shall copy here.

'DEAR NIECE—I cannot permit you to run the risk of ruining your prospects without giving you some further admonitions on the subject. Again I repeat, that unless you accept Mr Legrand, I will never see you again, neither will I grant the smallest assistance in future to your family. It was through your instrumentality I was ever induced to countenance your mother or her children, and through your instrumentality I may be obliged to give them up. Remember the squalid poverty of your home, where even common neatness did not exist a few months ago; remember what hardship and poverty are, with their attendant evils—insults from the wealthy, impertinence from the vulgar. The world is a cold place for the poor. You may have forgotten your home while enjoying the comforts of my house; you are, no doubt, set above yourself, but a little reflection cannot but put you right again. Consider what a fate your mother's has been—despised, cast off from her family, fallen from her own sphere of respectability, all through a low match. When I asked you to Ripworth, and allowed you to meet my stepdaughter on terms of equality, it was through the hope of your gaining many advantages from such intercourse, and I looked forward to your being settled ultimately in such a way as might redeem your whole family. Added to these considerations, I wish to say that Mr Legrand is my particular friend; he loves you, and you have given him encouragement. I am indebted largely to him in many ways, and I should regret deeply that any person under my roof should treat him in an unprincipled way. Your own conscience will tell you whether or not you have played with his feelings. For the sake of your mother and brothers, I urge you to think well before finally sending an answer to my friend. Do not cause me to curse the day I allowed you to set foot within the walls of Ripworth.—Your anxious uncle, MORTIMER DAUBENY.'

But my answer was already in Mr Legrand's hands! Had I wished it ever so ardently, I could not alter the course of things now. I felt like something guilty, for most truly I was to blame for the vanity which was apparently the cause of all this mischief. And must I leave Ripworth in disgrace? Must I meet my family like a criminal? Sitting in my bedroom window, looking at the dusky sky, where a few stars were peeping out, I felt indeed most wretched. One hope alone sustained me. Are there not often days in our lives when misfortunes seem to jostle each other with a fearful crowding? That evening, a letter reached me from home; it was from my mother, and the first part of it seemed to have been written some weeks before the end of it. Thus it ran:

'MY DEAR JESSIE—Your letter reached me duly, and I thank God that you have recovered from your illness, and that your friends at Ripworth treated you so kindly. As to the inquiries you wished me to

make respecting Mr Goad, I think I can now satisfy you that he is not a young man whose company can be very desirable, as he is neither religious, moral, nor even *honest*. As a great secret, Mr Horne informed me of something that shocks me much. It seems that old Mr Newdegate at one time refused his nephew money to pay a pressing debt, notwithstanding entreaties, and even threats; and the night after this refusal, money to a large amount was abstracted from the old man's desk. The nephew went to London next morning before any inquiries were made, but there could be no doubt in the world that he was the culprit. After that, Mr Newdegate lost all affection for the misguided young man; though he hushed up the affair very prudently, he never loved him since. What a dreadful thing in man or woman is want of principle! There are other reports respecting Mr Goad which lead me to think he cannot be a very proper person to stand on an intimate footing with either you or Miss Gordon. His immorality in every way is shocking.

I flung the letter down here as though a serpent had stung me. 'Why did I ever write to him?' I exclaimed, in a paroxysm of shame and humiliation. For many minutes, I felt unable to continue reading the letter, but when I took it up again, I saw that the rest of it was in Rosa's handwriting. I read the following like one in a dream:

'DEAR JESSIE—Since mamma wrote the first of this letter, something dreadful has happened. A short time ago, a gentleman, called Huntley, came to look at the park of Weston Cricket, which you know has been long advertised for sale, and Anna has eloped with him. How she happened to become acquainted with him, we cannot say, but mamma suspects Rachel of having led to it. My dear Jessie, I wish I could avoid telling you this bad news; I know you will be so unhappy, when otherwise you would be so gay and pleasant; yet why may we not hope that the case may not be so dreadful? Runaway matches do not always turn out badly, and perhaps Anna may not be unhappy after all. Poor mamma is very much grieved, and eats scarcely anything. I am so unaccustomed to writing, that I do not know how to tell you all that I want to say. Mamma thinks Uncle Daubeney may be able to do something about Anna. Write to us immediately.—Your ever affectionate sister,
ROSA KEPPLETON.'

Reader, you never can understand what I felt when I read this letter. Shame, grief, self-reproach, horror, filled my heart and soul. My head became hot, as if on fire; a yellow glare danced before my eyes, lighting up all objects in the room. I could not weep; an incoherent murmuring, a calling upon God without hope or faith, escaped from my lips. I wrung my hands, and moaned bitterly. Oh, my sister, had I been different from what I was, you never would have gone astray!

On looking at the date of this letter, and at the postmarks, I observed that it must have been delayed in some way for a whole fortnight beyond its due time of arrival. Poor little Rosa's hurried direction had not been altogether legible.

In the agony which this worst of all misfortunes caused me, I forgot all my own peculiar griefs; Anna's probable fate was the only thing I could dwell upon. After walking up and down my room frantically for some time, I lay on my bed like one in a stupor, for nearly an hour. On rising up, I tremblingly prepared to do something towards assisting my mother in her dilemma. Had I been able to meet my uncle face to face now, I would gladly have knelt at his feet, and implored pardon in the most humble manner. All my pride had vanished. Taking pen and paper, I was busy writing a submissive note to him, stating how matters stood at home, and entreating his assistance, when Purcell silently

brought me a missive from himself, containing these words:

'My friend Mr Legrand has told me all. He and I leave Ripworth this evening for London, and I have given orders that you shall have the carriage on Thursday to convey you to East Sutton, on your way home. From this date all correspondence between us ceases.
MORTIMER DAUBENY.'

I did not go to bed that night; I began packing up all my clothes, and crushing them here and there, as well as space would permit, in my trunk and band-boxes. How I detested the sight of all the finery that had cost so much money! I hated Ripworth and its neighbourhood. Would to God I had never seen it! I could have torn my lace and spangling head-dresses to pieces, and cast them to the winds; I could have heaped them all on the fire, and enjoyed their destruction; but having still some control over my passions, I did nothing extravagant. Before Wednesday morning, I had written two letters, to be sent off by the early post—one to my mother, stating that I was to be at home on Thursday evening; the other to that man in London, the recollection of whom made me blush. To him I wrote thus:

'I wrote unadvisedly this morning to you in a moment of rashness which I long to forget. Since then, circumstances have occurred which render it impossible for me to continue any further correspondence with you. Do not attempt to write to me again, for your letters must only be returned unopened if you do.
JESSIE KEPPLETON.'

How I longed for that decisive letter to be in his hand: I thought the hour would never arrive when it was to be despatched to the post. I determined to banish him from my memory for ever!

Oh, my sister, and what were my thoughts of you? Would I rather have heard of your death than of this terrible blighting of your young life? No. The dread of the eternal parting from my relatives, which death would occasion, was still worse than any other fear, however terrible. I was yet too young to consider death preferable to ignominy, as far as my friends were concerned, though in my own case my opinion was different. Death to myself would at any moment have been more bearable than a lasting disgrace. Had I not annoyed my uncle by rejecting Mr Legrand's offer, how differently would I now be situated! Ah! the protecting influence of a well-filled purse! What a treasure, and yet a curse, O gold, art thou!

CHAPTER XIX.

MY LAST DAY AT RIPWORTH.

So this wretched night passed, and the morning light found me a pale, unearthly-looking object, with large dim eyes, colourless lips, and wan, pinched features. I breakfasted in my dressing-room, and heard that Colonel Daubeney, with Mr Legrand, had left Ripworth last evening. The housekeeper, Mrs Gray, came to me in the forenoon, and said she heard I was to leave Ripworth also the following morning, and I thought her eyes as she spoke were fixed upon my face with a half-suspicious, wondering expression that pained me. I tried to look as unconcerned and dignified as I could, as I replied that I was really leaving the Hall next day.

'It's sudden, ain't it, ma'am?' she asked. 'And you're not going to London, either, I believe?'

'No; I return home,' I said, colouring deeply.

Mrs Gray may have been a kind woman, but I felt her now to be intrusive and impertinent. I was trembling nervously while she stood watching me for a few seconds in silence.

'You don't seem well, ma'am,' she said, after a pause; 'maybe you'd like some little cordial or other.'

'O no—no, thank you,' I replied hurriedly.

She gave a little cough ere she resumed.

'Colonel Daubeney's often hasty in doing things, ma'am, very hasty; and his temper, O dear!' Here she lifted her eyes up. 'And then he's not like other passionate people; he never forgives anybody that once vexes him. I once knew him to— But there's no use talking. Dear me, Miss Keppleton, you're like a ghost; take a sup of water.'

She handed me a glass of water as she spoke, but I could not drink it; tears rushed to my eyes, and a convulsive sob burst from my chest. Oh! why was I demeaning myself thus before a servant?

'Take heart, dear child,' said the woman soothingly; 'and if there's anything amiss, don't fear to trust me. I know young ladies sometimes are not as thoughtful for themselves as they'd be if they were older; many a sweet young creature has got herself into trouble, and no one to pity her, not even them that were the cause of it. It's very sudden, surely, your going home to your mamma this way, and nobody to travel with you. Colonel Daubeney's often terribly hard. Ah, miss, I've known him to send a whole family off the estate, if only a child of ten years old gave him impertinence. You'll forgive my making so free as to speak to you, Miss Keppleton, but I know the colonel's temper, and from what he said to me himself, I was afraid he was displeased with something that had lately occurred. I was indeed.'

Mrs Gray coughed nervously. She may have meant well, certainly, but I was not grateful for her kindness. Not all my efforts could check the wildness of my emotion. I wept most bitterly. This woman's sympathy gave the last stroke to my shame and humiliation. Seeing that I was not to be soothed by any endeavour of hers, she at length left me. Would all the servants at Ripworth discover that I was turned out of the house like a wretched dependant? Here was fresh cause for humiliation: I should be disgraced in the eyes of those who for months had looked up to me with as much deference as they paid their master and Miss Gordon. There is a certain pitch of mental agony that the heart cannot sensibly go beyond. We may die of grief, we may become insane with misery, but we cannot feel on this side the grave more than a fixed degree of pain. I had reached this last pitch of agony now; very little more would have rendered me torpid. I longed to be on the way home, far out of reach of my enemies at Ripworth. The day seemed interminable; I wandered through the rooms, glad to be the only living occupant of them, and was pacing up and down the red drawing-room, when the door opened, and Miss Milner was announced. Dressed in simple mourning, this lady looked, as usual, dignified and graceful, her countenance wearing the placid expression which I rarely saw it without.

'Are you quite well, Miss Keppleton?' she asked, looking a little fixedly at me.

'No—not quite; I have had a severe headache, and— and some news from home; in short, I am rather knocked up,' I endeavoured to say, while I felt tears rushing to my eyes.

'I hope nothing serious is the matter. Your mother'—

'She is ill,' I replied quickly, 'and I am going home to-morrow morning.'

'I am very sorry,' said Miss Milner quietly, and she looked at me with her grave scrutinising eye.

Ah! I felt even then, that, were I to throw myself on her protection and sympathy, she would not fail me; but I dared not.

'I also leave this neighbourhood to-morrow, or next day,' said Miss Milner. 'Lady Vignolles persuaded me to remain at the Park far longer than I had at first intended. Probably, it will be years before I leave my own home again. When you are as old as I am, you will discover that there is no place like home, Miss Keppleton.'

'Perhaps I have made the discovery already,' I replied, a little bitterly.

'Are you very gay at home?' she asked.

'O no; quite the contrary. Mamma does not like society, and we live very retired.'

'And then you do not go to London in the spring?'

'Certainly not.'

'It is as well, my dear; you will be saved many heartburnings, much turmoil, much of envying, strife, bitterness; rest assured of that. I daresay you have your nice little schools, your sewing-clubs for the poor, your various charitable societies to attend to at home. Life in the country is very pleasant when one is bent on being useful. Has your papa many tenants?'

'No,' said I blushing. Ah! why could I not speak out the truth boldly, and declare that my home was only a little farmer's cottage, and that I was the poor relation of Colonel Daubeney, turned out of his house for vexing him?'

'Many tenants give one much cause for responsibility,' said Miss Milner. 'I always feel that my villagers are my own peculiar people, whom it would be reprehensible to neglect in any way; but then it gives me much happiness to know that I am really loved by them. Perhaps you will some time yet be with me at Raven's Nest. See, here is a plan of a new school-house Mr Goad drew for me: is it not very pretty?'

'Mr Goad?' I repeated involuntarily.

'Yes; he is very clever. I wish he had been more fortunate with regard to his uncle's disposal of his property.'

'But he did not deserve anything more than he has got,' I replied hastily.

'Ah! you are against him, as well as most people. Poor young man, I believe there is more worth in him than is generally believed. One or two things that came under my own knowledge have led me to think very well of him.'

I longed to inquire what these things were, but did not feel courage for it.

'Is not Mr Legrand a particular favourite at Ripworth?' asked Miss Milner.

'Not of mine,' I replied decidedly.

'Nor of mine,' added my companion, looking on the ground for some moments.

There was a pause now in the conversation; both Miss Milner and myself felt we were touching upon dangerous ground.

'All the petty grievances of this life will soon be over,' she said at length; 'and even if justice is not awarded to the well and evil doer in this world, there is still eternity to look forward to. Only for the hope of something better than we can find here, Miss Keppleton, our sojourn on this side the grave would be very dreary.'

'Yes, very,' said I, feeling at the same time that I had not much hope from the future, more than from the dreary present. I had not yet learned to put my trust in Providence, or to look for the silver lining to a dark cloud. Oh! I saw nothing before me but despair and wretchedness.

'You have a good deal to do, no doubt, as you leave to-morrow,' said Miss Milner, seeing, I suppose, that my manner was pre-occupied and dull; 'I shall therefore say good-by, and perhaps we may soon meet again.'

'Soon again!' I repeated mentally, thinking such a thing very unlikely indeed.

Little did either she or I know how and when we were to meet next. She stooped forward, to my surprise, and kissed me, as I gave her my hand at parting. Even at the eleventh hour, it struck me that I might confide my troubles to her, and find sympathy and comfort; but my coward heart fainted. She was rich, she was kind, charitable, pious. Ah! if I could only

bring myself down from my pinnacle of pride! While I hesitated, her step was already upon the stairs; a footman was conducting her to the hall-door; her carriage drove away, and I was alone with my own dark thoughts. The dusk of evening fell soon after she was gone, and I saw the rooms of Ripworth, with their stately furniture, fading in the solemn light. I touched the piano, but recoiled from the sounds I brought forth. Then I paced the rooms feverishly, till I almost fancied weird forms came flitting before me hither and thither.

MY DOGS.

I HOPE you like dogs; if you don't, skip this paper, and improve yourself further on; I dislike having an unsympathising reader to sneer at my honest affection for them. They were among my earliest friends. I remember—and it's one of the first essays I can call to my remembrance—trying to write this news to an absent friend, and putting it down thus: 'Bo is well;' nor did I quite believe my meddlesome informant, who told me my dear dog-friend always spelled his name 'Beau.' However, the public continued to call him 'Bo,' without correction, and I therefore very fairly thought myself right throughout. He was red and white—rather ignorant, now that I come to look back on him by the light of experience gained in the society of clever dogs; but then he liked me, and does not that atone for many deficiencies? He had sense enough to discern attractions in me. Just fancy if our friends could not like or love us without giving good reason to the world for their predilection, or suppose we felt uncomfortable and suspicious at the consciousness of being liked by dull, unaccomplished people! Not that Beau was dull; anything but that: he barked and capered incessantly; so fond was he of lively exercise, that he made quite a beaten path in the shrubs all round a largish garden; and as soon as he was let out of the house for a walk, he would make the round of the premises before beginning to frisk. In this tour he generally surprised thrushes and black-birds, which flew out, making a great noise among the laurel leaves with their opening wings. When he returned from the home-circuit, he cut a caper, and was then ready to walk out, as a sober dog should. He never learned any tricks, or did anything wise or mischievous. Beau lived till I got into the first Latin exercise-book; then my brother and I buried him under a yew-tree, and set up a white-washed tile as a grave-stone, with an appropriate dog-Latin epitaph upon it.

Brisk was another of my early friends; he got the name because he succeeded to a predecessor so called; but he never deserved it. He was very corpulent and bilious; and this made him cross and exacting. As with some people whom I have known, his testiness brought him considerable respect; he was less put upon, more humoured and consulted than any dog I knew. We all called him Mr Brisk; and sometimes, when out walking, had to wait for him to keep up with us, he was so fat and slow. I see him now, bringing up the rear in the middle of the road, or ungraciously offering himself to be helped over a stile, without so much as a whine or a wag. Another Brisk, his immediate predecessor, killed himself with eating—not at once, but slowly, like a man. Besides having ground down all his teeth gnawing stones in a persistent, aimless sort of way, his taste in old age became so vitiated that he would eat most unlikely victual. I remember a dish of curry so hot, that, though we were rather famous for hot curry, none of the party could swallow more than a mouthful, which Mr Brisk ate all up at one go, without so much as winking. He was a humorous dog enough, and used to submit to a pair of spectacles, and sit up on his hind end; but he could not endure Sunday, and always howled when the church-

bells began. Except to church, he used to accompany me everywhere. Once, having missed me, but not being sure which road I had taken, the dog ran up stairs, and looked out at a window to see. This was more reasonable than a trick he had of chewing the buttons off the coats of my father's guests while they were at dinner. This peculiarity he had in common with a young blood-hound of my acquaintance in Berwickshire. Blood-hounds, however, are rather dangerous pets; sometimes they justify their name by sudden fits of savageness. I remember one, a magnificent fellow, who got into sad disgrace with his owner by frightening the butcher's boy into fits. He was given away, and, I heard, hanged at last for eating a sweep—a very dirty piece of business, to say the least of it.

Sometimes, of course, house-dogs are of use; we had one, however, who always wagged his tail with catholic hospitality to every comer. His kennel was close by the front door. Generally, Jupiter—that was his name—lay outside it, unchained, waiting to do the honours. One day while there were painters about the premises, we boys got a brush, and printed in big letters on the kennel, 'Beware of the dog.' Lo! the power of simple assertion! Presently Captain H— called in a gig; Jupiter advanced with a smile, as usual, and we received unbounded gratification at perceiving the captain remain sitting in his vehicle for more than five minutes, ashamed to retreat, but not daring to get down; he had to holler for the gardener to hold the dog, whose forward civility he thought only designing.

I should tell you we had a race of Jupiters, as we had a race of Brisks. One of them was a very fierce brute; he was always chained up strongly, and his kennel pinned down. He loosened it, however, on several occasions, and gave chase to terrified beggars, thundering after them, house and all. Fox was another house-dog we had; he never barked, but pounced on his game silently. Once he brought down a vagabond merchant with a great basket of yellow crockery on his head; he bit him behind, and seated him with a jerk in the middle of the carriage-road. Both of the pedler's hands being raised up to hold his load, he could not defend himself, and so got unequivocally bitten. We brought him into the kitchen, and purchased some of his wares to atone for this, besides giving him a hunch of bread and meat, with a mug of beer, to make things pleasant. I was quite a little boy then, but at this moment I distinctly see him depart down the avenue bolt upright, steadying his crate on his head with his left hand, while he rubs the injured, but to him invisible part, with his right. The dog who bit him was a white terrier, not very refined, though useful in his calling.

The most gentlemanly, well-educated dogs I ever knew have been large brown retrievers. I have had several. Their business demands much sagacity and self-command. They must not only trace the wounded animal, without being puzzled or led astray by the scent or sight of any number of unhurt ones among which it may retreat, but they must bring it back alive. A dog who bites the winged bird is considered worthless, for from biting he will probably proceed to eating. I remember a friend of mine taking out a dog one day who got the first bird down his throat before the sportsman could reload his gun. The keeper shot the greedy brute on the spot. Generally, however, these 'red' retrievers are tender-mouthed. I had one who would bring a cat out of a corner, or a duck from off a pond, loudly remonstrant indeed, and probably alarmed, but unhurt. Poor Busy was both clever and affectionate, though artful. No one knew better than herself when she had done wrong. When she felt the offence could only be atoned for in person, she would, being so desired, bring the whip herself. Hers, however, was a very conscientious family. Two of her grandchildren, while

pups, had been mischievously eating the heads off some carnations. I spoke to them both seriously, and they appeared penitent. Next morning, while I was getting up, I saw the young dogs walk into the garden from the stable-yard; presently, finding no one near, they nudged each other, and made for the carnation-bed. Just as they were about to begin their mischief, I threw up my dressing-room window, when, before I could say a word, they both scampered off shrieking, as if they were being struck, smitten and stung in their consciences. Their father, Busy's son, went mad. In the early stages of the malady, he walked round and round for hours. Not feeling certain what was the matter with him, I had him chained up in the stable, and watched. Presently my groom came running to me, into the garden, crying out that Ranger was loose and raging round the stable. I had on a thick pair of hedger's gloves, and went straight into the place to catch him. He flew at me like a wild beast, and I had to strike him fairly to the ground, poor fellow, with my fist, before I could get hold of him. This done, I put him into an outhouse; and finding the symptoms he shewed too clear to leave me any reason to doubt his madness, shot him before he did any harm, through a little hole in the door, which I cut with my garden axe.

The old rhyme says—

A wife, a spaniel, and a walnut-tree,
The more you beat them, the better they be.

Now, I am not going to question the effect of correction on the other subjects of this verse, but a spaniel I knew—who was more flogged than any dog of my acquaintance—got rather worse than better under the treatment. He was not mine; he belonged to a friend of ours, who lived on the other side of a shallow valley, about half a mile, by the road, from our house. We used to remonstrate sometimes, for the punishments were quite audible to us at home on still days. I have even heard, or felt almost sure that I heard, across the valley, the whacks upon Cesar's back. Cesar, though a high-spirited dog, used to yell horribly under the stick or lash, though, the moment he was let go, he would caper round his master, and not unfrequently consider himself entitled to begin running up a fresh score of offences immediately. The way that dog heaped one transgression upon another shewed a disobedience almost human. His master went to Wales to fish, and took him with him. Part of the journey was performed by rail, part by steam-boat. While in the train, Cesar ate a hole through the side of the box he was put in; on board the steamer, he slipped his collar, and did fatal damage among the luggage, especially crushing and flinging about some handboxes. When his master landed, he gave directions to have him carefully tied up in the stable of the hotel where he slept, but there was some harness within reach, which Cesar spoiled. The next morning, being taken out fishing, he killed a sheep.

To pass from spaniels to terriers. I have had many friends among the latter. One of the first was Mungo, an uncertain beast, but with rather a predominantly vindictive character. One instance of calculating revenge must suffice to describe him. He fell out on many occasions with a fierce cat we had; Pussy, somehow or another, managed to hold her own in several disputes. She scratched his face, and cuffed him about the chops—he was but a little dog—with such vehemence, that he generally drew off, and expected society to consider it a drawn-battle. Once, however, when she had kittens, or rather a kitten, for all the litter was drowned but one, he attempted to molest her, thinking, most probably, that her attention being drawn towards her young one, she might be approached with less risk. But Pussy slapped and spat at him, if possible, with more virulence and success than ever. So Mungo swallowed his anger, and waited his

time. One day, she took a little walk, leaving the kitten at home, when, I am sorry to say, he killed it, with malicious satisfaction. He was a smooth black and tan terrier.

Another we had, a rough Skye, atoned for the treachery of his kinsman. A cat of ours having borne kittens, deceased, Shock took them under his especial protection, lying with them in their basket, suffering no suspicious interference, and tenderly bringing them back to the basket, when anybody tested his affection by removing one and setting it down at some distance on the floor.

One peculiarity of these Scotch terriers is their tendency to be lost; you can never read the second column of the *Times* without seeing several advertised as strayed. They lose themselves like bunches of keys. I kept one for some time once in London; but I should not have done so unless I had kept him at home. Whenever he went out for a walk with me, he managed to half-lose himself. What with the inspection of areas for promiscuous cats, and a catholic interest in anything going on the streets, he was always getting out of sight or loitering behind; then missing me, he would consult everybody's countenance for directions or identification. Hence, he gave me so much trouble that I left him at home, where he grew fat and irritable. Often he sat half the day at the top of the area steps, barking at our neighbour's cat, or making violent efforts to get at some offensive street-boy, who mocked him safely through the railings.

His father was never in town, but died as he had lived—in the country. Poor Curry was a vehement hunter, especially of mice and cats; a common enemy to two inveterate foes. I remember on one occasion—it was the disturbance of a stack, I think—he not only killed, but swallowed twenty-seven mice, for (I desire to record my test as delicately as I can) he reproduced them after the sport. I can imagine twenty-seven mice, imperfectly killed, or at least swallowed before the agitation of their muscles, consequent on sudden death, had subsided, might well have disagreed with him. He was an insatiable enemy of cats. The parson of our parish, with whom he was great friends, once took him a round of parochial visitation. The first cottage he entered, to see a sick man, Curry entered too, and all went on well for some few minutes, until the pastor was suddenly interrupted in the midst of a serious interview by a battle-royal under the bed. Curry had found the cat, and with all forgetfulness of the command of temper required at theological discussions, pitched into his enemy at once in the most personal and offensive manner. Before he died, he had one of his eyes nearly scratched out. Coming unexpectedly on a cat with kittens, she slapped him in the face with such effect, that thenceforward his left eye was white and blind. He grew quite gray in his old age, but was a favourite to the last. He was a desperate fighter, and would tackle a dog twice his size. I remember, in one of his duels, when he fought a big dog of mine in the porch of our house, and got his teeth fixed deep in his enemy's throat, taking the big dog up, and loosening Curry's hold by knocking him (he was as tough as india-rubber) against the door-post.

I never had much to do with shepherds' and drovers' dogs, but have always considered them, intellectually, an ornament to their race. I suppose my reader knows the theory which accounts for some sheep-dogs having no tails: they take it out, or absorb it, at the other end in brains. By the way, what an odd thing that same wagging of the tail is! I have several times tried whether the sensation could be reversed, and the dog made happy by having his tail wagged for him; but, like most forced attempts at fun, the experiment always failed.

I have heard it said of some dogs, that they could

do everything but talk. I knew two or three who did even that—not that I could always understand them, but there was a rude attempt at speech in the modulation of their whines, quite distinct from barking or growling. They evidently had something particular to say, and were giving it, as they thought, an intelligible utterance. But whether dogs can speak or not, be sure they understand what is spoken. Would they be companions if this were not so? As it is, they are sometimes the safest. When I have told my troubles to Jones, how do I know that at some unguarded moment he may not repeat what I am sure he intended to have kept sacredly to himself? Now, doggie may be utterly trusted; you may tell him all you think about any one, and he will not only take the liveliest interest in the communication, but never peach. In Hood's *Bachelor's Dream*, we see the gradual confession of the master expand in the discreet sympathetic society of his dumb friends, beginning thus:

My pipe is lit, my grog is mixed,
My curtain drawn, and all is snug;
Old Fuss is in her elbow-chair,
And Tray is sitting on the rug.
Last night I had a curious dream,
Miss Susan Bates was Mrs Mogg;
What d' ye think of that, my cat?
What d' ye think of that, my dog?

I have, however, met with inconsiderate people—grown-up people, I mean—who have laughed at the animal pets of old maids. Poor ladies! depend upon it, in many a case their seemingly excessive care and affection for a dumb brute is but the outpouring of love turned back upon themselves, or never led in the right human direction. They must have something to caress and fondle. Mateless, childless, brought up in a prim artificial way, and yet withal conscious of affection, yearning for some living thing of their own they can care for, what wonder they dote upon a poodle, being denied all else! To them a dog is a merciful safety-valve; and so far from thinking an old maid with a pet spaniel indifferent to the graver, truer ties of love, I believe she is just the person to do good to others, if only she could be shewn how to do it.

Love for dumb animals by no means excludes that for our kin, while a man whom no animal can be brought to like, will always, in my eyes at least, be a suspicious character. Generally, if disliked by dogs, he is disliked by children too, which is horrible.

Of course there are persons who can see nothing to admire in dogs. I knew of one old gentleman who persistently refused ever to pat one, because they are never spoken well of in Scripture. The dogs there mentioned are mostly, perhaps entirely, the wild animals of the street, which indeed produce anything but a pleasing impression. They grin and run about through the city. But they are very useful for all that, and act as scavengers where sanitary laws are despised. Indeed, they are such foul feeders, that house-dogs have often to be watched and dieted, lest their coats at last should betray the coarseness of their victual.

Dogs bolt their food without more mastication than is needed to get bones and pieces small enough to pass down the throat. Instinct does not always tell them when they have had enough. As pike have been known to swallow fish nearly as long as themselves, and indeed sometimes shew the tail of a dinner sticking out of their mouths, so I have heard of dogs obliged to let a remnant of some long tough strip they have swallowed hang from their lips. We had a horrible illustration of this one day. A little dog of ours in the country got and nearly swallowed a meal in one dainty strip, which, however, he could not bite through; this was unfortunate, as he hadn't room enough for it all, and so was obliged to leave off with a pendant of about four inches from his chaps. Up

came a big dog, and laying hold of this, succeeded in securing the whole slippery meal himself, little dog growing meanwhile perceptibly lank! What a situation! to realise the gradual return of hunger, and see your enemy, nose to nose, absorb the late-won prize.

Every one knows anecdotes recording the dog's special excellence over many other animals; we have, however, yet to hear of one dog teaching another; when that comes to pass, we may expect the strangest progress in the world of brutes. Hitherto, animals have only learned; teaching is of man.

But there are some things, such as patience, attachment, and courage, in which some men might take a lesson even from my friends the dogs.

VOLCANOES.

IN TWO PARTS.—CONCLUSION.

THERE is a question connected with volcanoes which, simple as it may to some minds appear, has yet given rise to a good deal of discussion in the scientific world—namely, why volcanic vents should so universally assume the form of mountains. What we deem the most plausible hypothesis sets forth, that volcanoes are formed simply by the accumulation of erupted matter round a central orifice, which was originally either on a level with the surrounding country, or possibly even formed a hollow. That enough matter is poured out by an eruptive vent to form a mountain, is proved by the depth which the products of eruptions have attained in Etna, as shewn in the section presented to us in the Val del Bove, and which amounts to as much as 4000 feet, nor is there any appearance at the lowest part of the Val del Bove of our approaching the bottom of the erupted matter. There are many instances on record in which smaller mountains have been thus formed even in a single eruption, as, for instance, in the case of Monte Nuovo, formed on the shores of the bay of Baia during the eruption of Vesuvius in 1538 A.D. Sir Charles Lyell considers that the mode of growth of a volcano—as, for instance, of Etna—is very similar to the growth of exogenous trees, which increase by layers deposited externally. The gradual flow of lava, many months after its emission, has been described by Mr Scrope, who saw, in the Val del Bove in 1819, a stream still advancing which had been poured out nine months previously. The slope was very considerable, yet the thickness of the stream was considerable also, and it advanced at the rate of about a yard an hour. Its mode of advance he describes as being this: the lower stratum being arrested by the ground it was flowing over, the central portion of the stream bulged out, on account of the pressure from behind, and so being unsupported beneath, fell over, and was arrested by the ground in its turn; the upper crust of the stream having long before been solidified by exposure to the air, and being broken in pieces, with a continual crackling noise, by the failure of support beneath. Thus the whole stream resembled masses of rocks tumbling over each other in dire confusion; and the valley was filled, not with a smooth stream of lava, but with broken rocks and angular blocks. Within the fissures, the lava could still be seen to be of a dull red heat.

As a volcanic mountain gradually rises, the portion nearest the central vent is, of course, the highest, since the greater portion of the ejected materials fall near it, and only the lighter ashes and smaller stones or more fluid lava are conveyed to any distance.

Lateral discharges also are, of course, more frequent within the same amount of space as we ascend, and indeed occur but seldom in the lower regions of a mountain in any case, since the hydrostatic pressure of a column of lava is less, and the resistance which has to be overcome, and which is offered to its exit by the flanks of the mountain, is greater as we descend.

Though a volcanic mountain is, as it seems, thus piled up above the surrounding country merely by the accumulation of its own discharges, yet, of course, in many instances a considerable amount of its elevation above the level of the sea is caused by internal elevating force—a force acting, however, not specially on the mountain, but probably over a large district, the elevation of which is of course participated in by the mountain. Thus, in the case of Etna, the mountain has gained at least 800 feet by such elevation of the district, since marine shells have been found in the mountain flanks at that elevation; higher they have not been traced, as the marine strata at that height have become covered by sheets of lava; but in all probability, if we were able to examine the interior of the mountain, it would be found that they ascended to an elevation of 3000 feet, and that the volcano consequently owed so much of its height to these uplifting forces; this is inferred from the fact, that elsewhere in the district marine strata are found at that elevation, so that it is probable that the entire district was raised so much.

It may, of course, be supposed that if a volcano is piled up of materials torn from below by the agency of the subterranean fires, the internal hollows thus formed must occasionally be enlarged so much that their arches become unequal to the support of the mass of superimposed matter, and accordingly must occasionally yield. Of such yielding and consequent subsidence, we have several examples in historic records, as in the case of Papandayang in Java, when a tract of land fifteen miles long by six broad, and including an elevation of 4000 feet, sank down bodily at once; or, again, the truncation of the cone of Vesuvius, and sinking in of the Val del Bove—both of which, however, are inferred to have sunk, rather than recorded to have done so.

Comparing the size of Etna, which is far the largest of European volcanoes, with others mentioned above, we see that the scale on which volcanoes are found in Europe is small compared with that on which they are developed in other parts of the world; as, for instance, Cotopaxi in the Andes, and others of that chain—Cotopaxi attaining an elevation of 19,000 feet; or Mount Loa in the Sandwich Islands, which is about 14,000 feet high. The latter volcano is perhaps the most magnificent exhibition of volcanic agency to be found on the surface of the globe. The principal interest attached to it is owing not so much to the enormous crater at the summit, at an elevation of nearly three miles, though this, as it gradually fills up with liquid lava and overflows, is a magnificent spectacle; but even still more sublime is the appearance presented by a lateral crater on one side of the mountain, of even larger dimensions than the summit crater, and forming an enormous gulf between two and three miles across, and about seven and a half miles round, which is surrounded by vertical walls of solid rock about 1000 feet high. To this enormous crater the name Kilauea is given. It is sixteen miles from the highest crater, and about forty from the sea; and though comparatively at the foot of the vast cone, is yet as far above the sea as the summit of Vesuvius, or about 4000 feet high. It is formed by two chasms or hollows, one within the other. A precipice 650 feet deep, composed of compact

rock in layers varying from a few inches to thirty feet in thickness, flanks the larger of these hollows: this precipice is quite perpendicular, and at its foot lies a horizontal ledge of black rock of considerable breadth, which terminates in another precipice about 350 feet deep, and immediately surrounding a vast lake of lava, ever seething and boiling, and varying in height according to the supply of molten matter from the subterranean focus. At times, it rises up in the crater, and overflows the black ledge above mentioned, and then presents the magnificent spectacle of a lake of surging fire between two and three miles in diameter, and between seven and eight round. The lava, however, does not overflow the upper rim of the crater, for when it rises to a certain height it is carried off by underground vents, which have no doubt been formed by the hydrostatic pressure. Thus, in 1840, an eruption took place in which the lava flowed underground for six miles, when it made its appearance in an old wooded crater called Arare, the vivid light from which was the first intimation of the lava in Kilauea having burst through the walls of the great crater. The lava continued to flow for some weeks, during which time the lake in Kilauea sank over 400 feet; and since the bottom of the crater of Arare, where it first appeared, is itself over 400 feet deep, it is supposed by Mr Coan, an American missionary, who describes the eruption, that it was at first at a depth of as much as 1000 feet below the surface of the ground. It then ran underground for a couple of miles from Arare, and again coming to the surface, spread over fifty acres of ground; it then again became subterranean for several miles, till it reappeared in a second crater of older date, which it partially filled up, and again flowed on beneath the surface of the earth. Its final emergence was at a distance of twenty-seven miles from Kilauea, at a point 1250 feet above the sea-level. The remainder of its course to the sea, a distance of about twelve miles, it performed above ground, and then leaped over a cliff fifty feet, and fell into the sea with a tremendous crash during a period of three weeks. In its underground passage, it fissured the earth in many places, and upheaved some of the rocks as much as twenty or thirty feet.

It is a singular fact, that the lava in the crater of Kilauea by no means corresponds in its periods of eruption with that in the summit crater only sixteen miles off, the latter being often overflowing when Kilauea is at its lowest, and *vice versa*; thus plainly shewing, that though unquestionably they belong to the same volcanic centre, and are supplied by the same source, yet that there is no connection between the fluid in the two craters, since if there were, according to the laws of hydrostatic pressure, the lava in the summit crater could never rise higher than the opening at the top of the Gulf of Kilauea, whereas, in point of fact, the lava in the summit crater must rise 10,000 feet higher than this before it can overflow; yet the distance between the two craters is only sixteen miles.

The crater of Kilauea appears to have been formed by subsidence of the rocks owing to their having been undermined by lava, for at different distances round the crater are other precipices of perpendicular rock similar to those of which the crater is composed, and all bearing the appearance of having subsided at some former periods. They enclose altogether a space double the size of Kilauea, though, owing to the escape of the lava by the subterranean passages above mentioned, it never surmounts the upper precipice of the crater, but on the black ledge intervening between the two precipices it deposits a fresh layer on every occasion that it surmounts it.

One of the most abundant lava-currents ever poured forth from Etna, was that of the eruption of 1699, which was fifteen miles in length; and when it entered the sea near the city of Catania, was six hundred yards

broad, and forty feet deep. The surface and sides being solidified by their exposure to the air, it presented the appearance of a moving mass of solid rock advancing by the fissuring of its walls, and the pouring out of the fluid lava from the fissures. Observing this fact, an attempt was made, by breaking open the wall of the stream on one side with crow-bars and picks, to save the city of Catania; a lava-stream burst out from the opening; but as it seemed to threaten another town, Paterno, the inhabitants of the latter took up arms, and obliged the Catanians to desist. The current, accordingly, having first in its course overflowed fourteen towns and villages, reached the wall of Catania, which had been raised to a height of sixty feet on purpose to protect the city from such occurrences; however, it overtopped the wall, and poured down like a cascade, destroying part of the city, without, however, throwing down the wall. Long afterwards, excavations were made in the rock, and the wall re-discovered, so that at present the lava is seen curling over the top of the wall, as if in the act of falling.

Very much larger than this, however, have been some of the eruptions in Iceland—an island constituting a volcanic centre of most intense energy, some of the eruptions of Hecla, one of its principal volcanoes, having lasted for six years without interruption, and twenty years seldom elapsing without either an earthquake or eruption; while its hot springs or geysers, another manifestation of volcanic action, are constantly in a state of activity. New islands are often thrown up in the sea, some of which again subside, or are washed away by the waves, others remaining persistent.

An eruption is a most calamitous event to the inhabitants, for their principal means of support are the fish which swarm around their coasts, and their cattle; the former of which are driven from their shores by the lava pouring into the sea, and the latter suffer in a most extraordinary way from the ashes which cover their pastures. These ashes being pumiceous, wear the teeth of the cattle so effectually that they become absolutely useless; and the consequence is, that the animals literally die of starvation, though surrounded with plenty. A famine among the islanders is of course the result, and assistance generally has to be sent to them from Denmark.

One of the largest eruptive discharges ever known to occur, was that poured out by Skaptan Jokul, one of the volcanoes of Iceland, in 1783. It has been calculated by Professor Bischoff that the amount of matter brought up by this single eruption exceeded in magnitude the bulk of Mont Blanc. The eruption began on 11th June, having been preceded by violent earthquakes; the mountain then threw out a torrent of lava, which flowed down the channel of the river Skapta, and dried up the river, filling up a vast rocky gorge which it had occupied, and which was between four and six hundred feet deep, and two hundred wide; next it filled up a deep lake; and afterwards entering some subterranean caverns in an old lava-current, in which water appears to have accumulated, it blew up the rocks, throwing some fragments to the height of one hundred and fifty feet. A fresh stream of lava was thrown out a week after the first, and flowed over its surface with great rapidity; the stream then fell in a fiery cataract over a vast precipice, usually occupied by a waterfall. In August, a fresh flood of lava was forced to take a new course, as the channel of the Skapta was quite filled up, and it ran down the channel of a river with a most unpronounceable name, which our readers may make the best they can of—namely, Hverisfjot. These streams of lava in the plains formed vast lakes, sometimes from twelve to fifteen miles wide, and a hundred feet deep. This eruption lasted as long as two years, and destroyed twenty villages by fire alone, besides some overwhelmed with water, owing to the blocking up of the river-

courses; and out of fifty thousand inhabitants, nine thousand perished, as well by starvation from the causes above mentioned, as by the actual destruction of the crops themselves, and also from noxious vapours filling the air. The Skapta branch of the lava was fifty miles in length, and in some places from twelve to fifteen miles broad; the other branch was forty miles long, and about seven broad, both being about from one hundred to six hundred feet thick—an amount of matter probably as great as can be shewn to have been poured out at any period, ancient or modern, by one volcano in a single eruption.

Considering the vast extent of our globe which is under water, it may readily be supposed that volcanic eruptions will often occur under the sea, similar to those mentioned above as having formed new islands near Iceland. Owing, however, to the difficulty of observation, records of marine eruptions are not very common; and, indeed, when we consider the immense depth of the ocean in many parts—the Atlantic having been sounded to the depth of seven miles, and the Pacific being probably even deeper—it is evident that an eruption might be actually going on over the sea-bottom while a vessel sailing above would be quite unaffected, and no signs of the occurrence be apparent to those on board. Occasionally, however, when the sea-bottom is near the surface, an eruption is observed and recorded by some passing vessel; but the accounts often consist of nothing more than the mention of violent ebullition of the water, with discoloration from mud, or of jets of steam and water, or of gaseous vapours having been observed. Sometimes a more scientific account is obtained, or an eruption in a favourable locality may last long enough to allow of its being visited specially by scientific men. In 1831, an island was thus thrown up in the Mediterranean between Sicily and Carthage, in a spot where, a few years before, there had been over a hundred fathoms of water. Though its existence as an island was limited to a period of three months, yet within that short space of time no less than seven names were bestowed on this small but interesting little patch of ground. Graham Island was the name adopted by the Royal Society, having the merit of being that given by Captain Senhouse, R.N., who first succeeded in effecting a landing on it. Sir Pulteney Malcolm, a fortnight before the eruption, in sailing over the place, felt distinctly the shock of an earthquake, as if his ship had struck against a sand-bank; but a Sicilian captain, named Corrao, was the first to observe the eruption itself, on July 10, 1831. He describes a column of water, 800 yards in circumference, as having been shot up to a height of sixty feet, and after this a column of steam as having ascended to a height of about 1800 feet. About a week later, passing by the same place, he found that a small island had risen from the waves. It was, perhaps, the smallest volcano ever seen, being only at that time twelve feet high, yet it had a crater in its centre, and poured out cinders, pumice, ashes, and vast columns of vapour. There was a small pool of boiling water occupying the central basin, and multitudes of dead fish covered the sea around. It increased considerably in size, so that by the beginning of August it was three miles in circumference, and about 200 feet high, the central crater being about ninety yards across. After this, however, it began to be washed away by the action of the waves, and gradually to disappear. While it was diminishing in size, however, the phenomena first observed by Corrao of ebullition of the sea, and the ascent of a column of steam, were again seen in the sea very near the island, shewing that there was a second crater of eruption at some little depth. Graham Island had quite disappeared by November; and that it was not by subsidence that this disappearance was caused, but by the action of the waves on the lighter volcanic products, is proved by the fact, that a reef composed

of black lava rock still remained, its surface being about ten feet under water. There was also a second shoal of rock about 150 yards from the principal reef, which no doubt occupied the site of the second eruption. Outside these reefs, the water rapidly deepened. Sir C. Lyell concludes that a hill about 800 feet in height was raised above the bottom of the sea, the upper 200 feet forming the island, and being composed of loose tuffs, while the under part was probably composed of solid lava, poured out over the bottom of the sea.

It would seem, also, from various phenomena observed within the last hundred years, that an island, or group of islands, is slowly rising in the mid Atlantic, along a line intersecting St Helena and Ascension, and about thirty to forty miles south of the line. Both the islands mentioned are volcanic; and the line, if prolonged, would nearly intersect the groups, likewise volcanic, of the Canary Islands and Azores; so that in the course of time it is highly probable that we might have a chain of volcanic mountains occupying this line, and forming the border of a new continent.

Sometimes when an island has been thus formed, it is not again washed away, but the rocky portion of the ejecta rise above the sea, so that the island withstands the action of the waves, and becomes permanent: an illustration of this is found in the island of St Paul's in the Indian Ocean, a little southward of the track of vessels from the Cape of Good Hope bound for Melbourne. This is a small rock, in many respects resembling the atolls or coral reefs of the Pacific. It is between three and four miles long, and about two miles across, containing at one side a crater about a mile broad, and 180 feet deep, surrounded by steep cliffs, the highest peak of which is 820 feet in height, while nearly opposite to this peak the edge of the crater sinks to the sea-level, so that the crater is full of sea-water, though the entrance is nearly dry at low water. It has been remarked that every crater will have one side much lower than all the others—that side, namely, towards which the prevailing winds never blow, and towards which, therefore, the ashes and scorie are rarely carried during an eruption. If, then, from any cause, the sea gain access to this side, as during a partial subsidence, the flow and ebb of the tide may keep this passage permanently open, even should the island again rise slowly above the sea, along with an elevation of the sea-bottom, at the rate, perhaps, of a few feet in a century.

Barren Island, in the Bay of Bengal, is similar to St Paul's, except that, in the centre of the crater, which is very much larger, there rises another volcanic cone, about 500 feet high, and having its own crater; and it has been supposed, very naturally, that this island affords another instance of the truncation of cones, the original summit of the mountain having sunk in, and a new central cone having been subsequently formed, and at present rising to about the same height as the remaining cliff-walls of the old crater.

One cannot fail to be struck with the marked resemblance between the appearance presented by this island and that seen in the presumed volcanoes in the moon. The surface of our satellite, as is pretty generally known, shews through the telescope every appearance of wild and barren desolation, and it is well ascertained that there is no water on its surface, and at most but a faint trace of an atmosphere extending only about 1000 feet from the surface at furthest, and of extreme rarity. There are, however, mountains innumerable all over the surface of the moon; and since, on our own globe, mountains are produced only by two causes, namely, aqueous erosion removing the softer and looser soil during the upheaval of land from the sea, while the harder and more rocky districts, or those less exposed to water-currents, remain

and form mountains; and, secondly, volcanic eruptions, and since the first of these causes is absent in the moon, it seems fair, judging from analogy, to infer that volcanic eruptions have been the cause of the production of mountains in that globe; and the whole appearance of most of the mountains in the moon favours this view, many of them being composed of rocks apparently piled together in the wildest disorder, while many more present exactly the appearance seen in Barren Island, and on a much larger scale at Santorin in the Grecian Archipelago; namely, an external range of mountains enclosing an elevated plain or valley, in the centre of which rises a single steep cone, or occasionally more than one. The mountains in the moon are generally on a scale proportionately much larger than those of the earth, and this might perhaps be accounted for in two ways—for if there were no sea on the earth, the inequalities of its surface would be much more strongly marked, since a depth of seven miles would have to be added, which is now occupied by the sea; or, secondly, since the mass of the moon is so much smaller than that of the earth, its attractive force is of course proportionately less, and, accordingly, any explosive force would produce a much greater effect, such as throwing rocks higher, or to greater distances, than would be produced by the same amount of force on the earth's surface. In general, accordingly, the craters, if such we assume them to be, in the moon are larger than similar ones on the earth, and generally also differ from them in not having one side lower than the rest—a circumstance which, as explained above, is owing to the action of the winds and waves, both which are absent in the moon. However, in the Santorin group of islands, if the sea were absent, we should have a crater of very considerable dimensions, the external circumference of the islands being about thirty miles, and the internal eighteen.

Space would scarcely permit us to enter on a discussion of the theories which have been proposed to account for volcanic action; we shall, therefore, merely mention the view that is most commonly received—namely, that heat is generated in the interior of the earth by the chemical action resulting from sea-water obtaining access to unoxidized metals, such as potassium and sodium; and that this heat is sufficient to cause fusion of the surrounding rocks, while the volume of gases, and especially of hydrogen, evolved by the decomposition of the sea-water and the salts which it contains, forms an elastic vapour of sufficient expansive force to lift the molten materials to the orifice of eruption, or sometimes, if such a vent be not given to it, to lay a whole continent in ruins by the desolating shock of the earthquake. This is the view adopted by Lyell and most geologists; and though many objections might be made to it, it has at least sufficient arguments in its favour—such as the proximity of volcanoes to the sea, and the nature of some of the gaseous products of eruptions—to enable it to hold its ground until a better shall have been proposed.

OBJECTIONABLE ENGLISH.

Aggravate, in the sense of irritate. 'He aggravated me so much that at last I struck him.' The least reflection on the etymology of the word is sufficient to shew how erroneously it is here used. A gentleman might say: 'His conduct towards me was very insolent; the offence was aggravated by my having never shewn him anything but kindness.' It is probably from its use in such a legitimate connection of ideas, that it has at length come, in loose common speech, to represent the words insult and irritate.

Some. 'It took the counsel some two hours to cross-examine the witness.' The proper word to be used is 'about.' It is remarkable that Raleigh, Bacon, Milton,

Addison, and Prior use the word 'some' in this objectionable way.

Progress, as a verb. 'We are progressing favourably.' This is a barbarism recently introduced from America. While such words as proceed and advance exist, it seems a pity to adopt a new one out of its old and accustomed sense. Here, too, however, there is not wanting a certain classic sanction, for the word is used as a verb by Milton.

Antiquarian, as a noun. Antiquarian being the adjective, it is surely best that we use antiquary as the noun, seeing that it is at our service. The language, by being varied, is enriched.

Talented. 'Talents,' in the sense of mental abilities, is itself a scarcely legitimate term, being only adopted figuratively from the word in the scriptural parable. When used as above, it becomes unbearable. Our language, as it happens, exhibits a poverty of words for mental ability; yet 'gifted' would be preferable to 'talented.'

'You would wish me to invite you; but I am not going to.' 'Mark caught the words he was not intended to.' These sentences give examples of an elision which has become very common in the familiar language of the middle classes, and is even creeping into print. Let it be condemned and avoided.

As well, in the sense of also. 'He was very angry, and I was hot as well.' This is another growing grammatical evil much to be deprecated.

Directly, in the sense of when or as soon as. 'Directly the pot is boiling, take it off the fire.' The word is here manifestly used in a wrong relation.

'The question lays in a nutshell.' This sentence occurred a few years ago in a daily journal of very high repute. It is an example of a mistake very general in conversation amongst the middle classes of the English people [it is unknown in Scotland]—the active verb *lay* substituted for the neuter verb *lie*—and which most frequently occurs in the preterite, as 'I laid down in bed,' for 'I lay down,' &c.; or 'I had scarcely laid down in bed,' for 'I had scarcely lain down,' &c.

Left, for departed. Thomas left this morning at six. In using the word 'left,' the mention of the place departed from is strictly necessary.

In this connection. 'In this connection, we may also advert to the shallow learning of the present age.' Meaning, in connection with this fact, or proposition, or group of ideas. This is a piece of corrupt phraseology which seems to have taken its rise in the American pulpit, but is now spreading in England.

'Those sort of things.' The proper expression to use would be that sort of things, or things of that kind.

'John, whom she said was looking another way.' This is an example of a direct breach of grammar not unfrequently seen in books. The relative pronoun ought obviously to be in the nominative (who), to govern the verb 'was looking;' the words 'she said' being parenthetical.

Party, for person. 'I asked Thomas if he had long known that party,' referring to a gentleman formerly seen in Thomas's company. This vulgarism seems to have taken its rise in the counting-house and exchange, where, being first used legitimately with regard to individuals in a bargain, it has at length come to be employed as a general term for an individual or person. It ought to be sternly repressed.

To these specimens of improper English may be added a specimen of improper Scotch. The word 'canny' is constantly used in England as a Scotch word, appropriate to a low prudence or roguish sagacity, which southern people are pleased to attribute to their northern kinsfolk. Now, if Englishmen feel themselves entitled to use terms of obloquy regarding the morals of their neighbours, let them do it in correct language. The word 'canny,' in reality, means gentle, innocent, propitious, and has no connection whatever with either cunning or prudence.

A FACT IN PRACTICAL EDUCATION.

A parish schoolmaster in Scotland was, a few years ago, successful in attracting a considerable number of boarders to his establishment, for whom he constructed temporary buildings in connection with the small house allowed him by the parish authorities. He was extremely assiduous in pushing on the studies of his boarders in the evenings, that they might always be well prepared for the lessons in school next day; yet, to his no small surprise, the children of the small-farmers and cotters, who never had any preparation beyond what they could give themselves at the cottage firesides of their parents, usually made a better appearance in school than their genteel and well-drilled compeers. On inquiring into this phenomenon, he became satisfied that the cottage children were benefited by the want of his evening tutorage; in other words, that the boarders were not the better of it. It appeared that they trusted too much to mechanically learning their lessons from him; while the cottage children, obliged to puzzle out everything for themselves, had their natural faculties evoked and brightened up, and, in this process, became the superior scholars. Being remarkably free from prejudice, he readily adopted the expedient of merely assigning the boarders their lessons, with grammar and dictionary, leaving them to their own resources for the rest; and he soon found, in their ascending to the level of the cottage children, a proof of the advantage of a self-dependent course of action in education, as in the affairs of the world generally.

THE PASSING CLOUD.

O CLOUD, so beautiful and fleet,
Passing where fierce suns burn and beat,
O'er heights untrod by human feet!

Chameleon cloud, of iris hue,
As changeful as a drop of dew,
How many shapes in moments few.

A car, a globe, a golden gloom,
How many forms thou dost assume?
A mountain, pyramid, or tomb.

So many shapes beneath the sun,
So many dyes that fusing run,
And beauty still in every one.

Tinged with the hue the rainbows cast
On snow-peaks, where their image fast
Fades down before the scowling blast.

Such golden light the young moon threw
Upon the still drops of the dew,
What time the night-wind fresher blew.

Such lustre water-lilies throw
Upon the brook that lies below,
Lipping their blossoms with its flow.

'Twould make a brain-sick painter pine
To win a hue to match with thine,
To make his martyr's mantle shine.

In such a cloud the angels seek
The hermit on the granite peak,
So pale, so humble, and so meek.

Such cloud when Jesus, long ere day,
Had sought the mountain-top to pray,
A halo round him seemed to play.

W. T.

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